THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

P.O. BOX 8 KING, ONT., CANADA

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Sorry about that blank page in the last issue (p. 16). We had planned to introduce a new feature on it -- the Ragtime Playmate of the Month -- but the printer refused to run it and we had to scrap the whole thing at the last minute.

Enclosed with this issue is the magazine supplement from the Toronto 'Globe & Mail' with a feature article on The Ragtime Society written by Patrick Scott, Canada's foremost jazz critic (see pages 12, 13 and 16 of the supplement). Since the 'Globe' magazine has a nationwide circulation, we're sure this article will give a pretty fair boost to ragtime and the Society. Incidentally, that's Gale Foehner of Rochester, N.Y., on the cover.

PERFORMERS

Bob Darch took a few days off from his very successful engagement here at the Golden Nugget to appear on the March 16th Bell Telephone Hour from New York. Sorry we didn't have enough advance warning to send out a general notice, but hope some of you picked it up from your local listings. Theme of the show was "A Trip Down the Mississippi" conducted by Burl Ives. Bob portrayed the ragtime-on-the-river segment with MAPLE LEAF, then segued into a production version of GEORGIA CAMP MEETING. With two top ragtimers appearing on their show within a month of each other, the Bell is fast emerging as one of North America's most active patrons of the ragtime art.

Bob's future itinerary, as of the moment: up until May 8th at the Golden Nugget, Toronto; May 17th to June 26th at the Gazebo Room, Alexandria Bay, northern N.Y. state; June 28th to July 31st at the Cherry Creek Inn, Denver.

Filling in very capably during Bob's five-day absence from Toronto were Treb Tichenor and Al Stricker of St. Louis Ragtimers fame. Many of us were looking forward to our first live performances by Treb and Al, and nobody was disappointed to say the least. They play a truly great brand of ragtime -- a pleasant, unhurried tempo, with lots of interplay between Treb's piano and Al's banjo. Their repertoire is enormous, the humor is good and they have a tremendous respect for the music. It's worth walking a long, long distance to hear them. By now the Ragtimers (including Don Franz, tuba, and Bill Mason, cornet) have probably moved on board their own showboat, the Goldenrod, anchored along the levee in front of St. Louis' Gateway Arch. The boys tell us the Goldenrod was built in 1909 and is the largest showboat ever launched.

Good news for northern New York state and southern Ontario members -- another Golden Nugget is slated for opening in Niagara Falls (Ontario) sometime in late summer or fall. The club will be based on the Toronto prototype, i.e., Las Vegas decor and ragtime performers. More details when we get them.

Dave Pope dropped us a card saying he'd caught Wally Rose (and seven rags) at his new location in the Cirque Room Pianobar at San Francisco's Fairmont Hotel. Wally opened there

March 8th and plays nightly, except Sundays, from 9 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. Dave has promised to send us a performer profile on Wally soon.

Bob Durst, the "Rajah of Ragtime" from Huntsville, Ohio, tells us he has been playing at the Crystal Palace Saloon in Tucson, Arizona since January and will be at the Wayside Inn Supper Club in Lima, Ohio from May 1st to August 1st. Bob's booked at the Tall Timber Supper Club in Dayton, Ohio for October, then back to Tucson.

We welcome three new members from the ranks of the professionals:

. . . actor and folk artist-authority Burl Ives

. . . trumpeter Red Nichols, leader of the famous Five Pennies (Both Burl and Red were introduced to the Society by Bob Darch; by coincidence, we feature in this issue a review of one of Red's latest albums, "Blues and Old-Time Rags.")

. . . and from Council Bluffs, Iowa, ragtime banjo man Dale Linville who has been playing at the Gas Lamp in Omaha, Nebraska for about four years with such pianists as Percy Franks and Ray Rose. Dale is billed as "The Iowa Farmer" and explains that he raises grain during the summer months.

Another new member and performer is Bradley Weage, nine years old, from Plymouth, Michigan. Bradley is a friend of Tom Shea and tells us that he is going to play Tom's SPASM RAG in the forthcoming Plymouth Band Show.

THAT RINKY-TINK SOUND . . .

It occurred to us that we have never really published much on the care, feeding and doctoring of pianos. This issue we feature some comments by piano tuner-technician Gale Foehner on how to (and how not to) achieve that rinky-tink sound:

"A device called the Rinky-Tink unit (or Mandolin attachment) is supplied in the U.S. by Schaff Piano Supply Co., 2009-21 N. Clybourn Ave., Chicago, Ill., 60614. (In Canada by D. N. Best & Co. Ltd., 221 Richmond St. W., Toronto 2B, Ont.) This unit lists at $29.90 ($35.25 in Canada). It does a very good job, and is worked at your convenience by a cable underneath the keyboard. The tabs are spaced on an aluminum drop-bar, and when lined up with the hammers, are locked in place with a plastic tape. Each tab has a metal eyelet at the lower end; these hit the strings, making the mandolin sound. The durability is okay — at least 10 years, more likely 20. When the pianist does not want the rinky-tink effect, he pushes the cable knob and the drop-bar assembly is raised above the hammers; pulling the knob out lowers the assembly into place.

"Unfortunately, a piano supply house may not sell the unit to you unless you contact your local tuner and have him order it, as all the supply companies advertise that they sell to tuners only. One can try and see if this is true, although your tuner may be able to get his regular discount for you, if you have him tune the piano also.

"Never have your piano tuned to any pitch but A-440, which is now accepted at the world-wide standard. Some instruments such as accordians, organs, oboes, etc, are not easily changed, but a piano if left untuned for some years will be a half tone or note below the correct pitch. The tension on the strings always tends to pull the pitch flat, as does the shrinking effect of the wood (soundboard and bridges) in the dry winter heat.

"Another way to get the rinky-tink sound would be to have the piano tuned correctly, then let down each third string on a note (or what is called a unison) just a trifle, causing the one string to be a little out with the other two. This is what is done on the 'Celeste' stop on an organ — the pipes or reeds are placed a little out of tune to give more interest to the tone.

"It is not a good idea in my opinion to hit the strings with thumbtacks in the hammers, especially in the bass where the strings are covered with soft copper -- it will produce buzzing notes as the winding gets mashed and loose. The Rinky-Tink unit mentioned above has a muffler strip for the bass to protect the strings. Probably the thumbtacks will not cause any permanent damage to the plain wire strings, as they are the best steel available and can take a terrific strain without breaking. More damage would be done to the felt hammer which at this point (the striking point) is tightly stretched across the inner wood molding. Putting a large hole in the felt with a thumbtack may let off too much tension, giving a weak tone if the tacks are ever removed. They do not stay in place too well anyway, being too short at the point to penetrate far, and there is only about a quarter of an inch of felt in the high treble, and this is usually impenetrable without breaking something."

Another method of getting the saloon sound from a piano is to harden the hammer felts with shellac, lacquer or collodion. (Collodion is a medical preparation. Note - for hammer hardening, be sure to specify the non-oil base type of collodion.) BUT - the result is permanent, short of replacing the hammers or filing down the felts. The sound you get is good, but if you value your piano as a fine instrument, think seriously before hardening the felts. To apply the lacquer, brush it on in thin coats, allowing plenty of drying time between coats. By building it up in thin layers like this, you can test until you get the sound you want. -Ed.

Gale continues: "The trouble with shellac or lacquer on the hammer striking points is that the tone is always the same -- harsh and tinny. The full name of the instrument is piano-forte, meaning soft and loud, and with hard hammers the tone is always loud even though one plays with less touch.

"Perhaps the connection between the tinny sound and the old rags that people recall was that the pianos were in such constant use that the hammers became worn right down in a few years, and should have been replaced but never were. The hammer may strike the string millions and millions of times in a few years, and this causes grooves to be worn in the hammers, making them blunter and blunter. I have seen quite a few old pianos where the wood molding of the hammer is hitting the strings in the last octave, and there was no need for any attachment to get the old sound.

"I will try to find time to write an article on how to choose a player piano or upright piano. One sure way is to depend on one of the good quality names -- perhaps 50 or so out of the 6,000 manufacturers through the years."

Gale adds: "I have two good players for sale; the piano parts have been repaired and regulated, in tune, they come with the player mechanism all disassembled ready to have the new pneumatic cloth glued on, my blessings, and where to get Larry Givens' book on rebuilding players (R.D. 1, Wexford, Pa.) -- all for $100. The parts are there, but for two years I have not had the two weeks or so that it takes to rebuild each player."

Many thanks for an extremely interesting article, Gale, and we're looking forward to your advice on choosing a piano. For those interested in Gale's two sale pianos, his address is 171 Cloverland Drive, Rochester 10, N.Y., telephone DU 1-5058.

BOOKS AND FOLIOS

In the December issue (page 81) Bob McGrath reviewed Sam Charters' book -- "Jazz - New Orleans" -- and has sent us a note advising that the book is produced by Oak Publications, 121 West 47th St., New York 36, N.Y., is revised and updated as of 1963 and costs $2.95. It has several old photographs, as well as new ones, of the street and society bands and of the city.

Bob adds: "Ever since I saw Max Morath and heard his exhilarating performances, I've had a growing interest in and appreciation for the 'Turn of the Century' as Max so eloquently

calls it. I have since collected a fair amount of data in the way of books, novels, etc, specifically those dealing with the customs and people, and especially their moral standards and tastes. I am now reading what I would call an excellent book on the subject called 'Mauve Decade,' compiled and written by Thomas Beer. It has everything -- humor, pathos, tragedy, drama, excitement. It deals a lot with the literary trends, social reforms, tastes, moral standards and how they shaped an appalling, sometimes puritanical society. It is published by Vintage, a division of Random House, and costs $1.10. Another book is a novel by Edith Wharton called 'The Age of Innocence.' This one Max mentioned in his show at the Village Vanguard this past summer. Another book -- 'Read em and Weep' by Sigmund Spaeth -- deals with songs, tear-jerkers, and the formula for writing them and how they were sometimes taken from life. Spaeth has written quite a number of books on this subject.

"The best folio I have come across on songs of the Gay Nineties is the 'Mammoth (#17) Collection of Gay Nineties Songs' by the Robbins Music Corp. (799 7th Ave., N.Y. 19). Cost is $2.00. Several others are 'Tear Jerkers Everyone Loves' and 'Old Time Hits' - both by Edward B. Marks Music Corp. (RCA Building, Radio City, N.Y.). Also 'Memory Tunes on Parade' which comes in three or four folios (Paragon Music Pub., 57 Third Ave., N.Y. 3)."

We find this a fascinating subject, too, and can add a few items to Bob's list. Books: 'Victorian Vista' and 'Edwardian Promenade' by James Laver, published by Edward Hulton, London, England. These two delightful books are worth searching for; they cover English society from Victoria's accession to 1900, and from 1901 to the First War, respectively. An interesting paperback, just published by Doubleday, is 'The Madams of San Francisco' -- a history (1849 to 1962) of Frisco's parlor houses, their colorful proprietresses and their "fair but frail" indwellers.

Folios: '88 Grand Old Songs' (Shapiro, Bernstein & Co. Inc.) and 'Songs of the Gay Nineties' (Amsco Music Pub. Co.) There must be many others -- write and tell us about them.

COMING EVENTS

We've heard via the grapevine that tentative plans are being made for a Ragtime Festival, to be held on board the Goldenrod in St. Louis sometime in late summer. This could shape up as a real landmark, rag-wise, and we offer Treb and his associates every encouragement. We couldn't ask for a more central location than St. Louis, or a more colorful and authentic setting than the Goldenrod. Kick 'em up high, and keep 'em flyin'!

The 1965 Annual Reunion of the Sheet Music Collectors is being held in Willow Grove, Pa. (near Philadelphia) on Sunday, June 13th, with festivities starting about 11 a.m. "Refreshments all day, and a Smorgasbord luncheon at 3 o'clock. Bring those duplicates, trade or sale items, or just new acquisitions that you want to show off." Those interested in further details and how to get there should write to Clifford W. Kropp, 135 Greyhorse Rd., Willow Grove, Pa., telephone OL 9-5051.

AUTOMATION . . .

Charlie Rasch, of Ann Arbor, Mich., sent us a brochure describing the Dynavoice Automatic Piano Player, manufactured by Dynavoice Inc., Plymouth, Michigan. This is a unit that fastens on top of the keyboard of any 88-note grand, spinet or upright and plays standards piano rolls . . . electrically operated (no pedals to pump) . . . portable (less than 35 lbs.) . . . will play, re-roll, shut off -- or play, re-roll and re-play -- automatically . . . comes in red, brown or ivory finish . . . full one-year factory warantee against defective workmanship and materials . . . and costs $295. It has an infinite variation speed control, and a three-position volume control. We don't know whether this is the machine that Marge Traeger and Bob McWhirter were referring to or not (Nov. & Jan. issues), although we doubt it, since the Dynavoice was first introduced at the Music Industry Trade Show in Chicago last July, and only came on the market in January of this year. We would appreciate hearing from anyone who has seen it in operation and can tell us more about it.

RECORDS

Following is a list of LP's stocked by the Society:

Tom Shea:

Classic & Modern Rags; The Ragtime Society RSR-1

Prairie Ragtime; The Ragtime Society RSR-2

Max Morath:

Waltzes, Shouts, Novelties, Rags, Blues, Ballads and Stomps; Epic LN-24066

Oh, Play That Thing! Epic LN-24106

Ann Charters:

A Joplin Bouquet; Portents-1

The Professors:

Volume 1 - Brun Campbell, Dink Johnson; Euphonic ESR-1201

Volume 2 - Campbel, Johnson and Euday Bowman; Euphonic ESR-1202

PRICES: Any two of the above for $8.50 postpaid ($9.00 overseas) or $4.50 each postpaid ($5.00 overseas).

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Hank Jones:

This is Ragtime Now! ABC-Paramount ABC-496

Ann Charters:

Essay in Ragtime; Folkways FG-3563

Joe Lamb:

A Study in Classic Ragtime; Folkways FG-3562

PRICES: $5.00 each postpaid (add 50¢ to total overseas order)

Please note: for those of you who have ordered the Joe Lamb album -- this LP is still back ordered with the publisher, and we have received no word on its availability. If you would like us to refund your money, please drop us a note; otherwise, your order will be filled as soon as the album is received.

The Bob Darch album - "Ragtime Piano" - is out of stock, at least in Canada. We are trying to obtain a supply and will let you know if and when we do.

BOOK REVIEW by Gary Ellison

"Music on My Mind: The Memoirs of an American Pianist" by Willie the Lion Smith and George Hoefer; Doubleday Pub.; $4.95

If "They All Played Ragtime" is a romance, so then is "Music on My Mind." In it, an exponent of stride piano tells how and why he was a ragtimer. Many things too numerous to mention come to mind as the book is reviewed.

There are the house rent parties in Harlem where the Lion, James P. Johnson, Fats Waller (or "Filthy," as the Lion used to call him) and Eubie Blake used to play; his remembrance of Lottie Joplin after Scott died; his personal friendship with James P. and Fats; his description of Jelly Roll Morton. Also, Mr. Hoefer has four interludes -- Harlem Stride Piano; Pre-Prohibition Harlem; Harlem During the Twenties; and Willie the Lion, Pianist.

The book is written almost as if the Lion were talking to you personally about his jobs, friends, feelings and criticisms. Any youngster thinking about music as a profession should read this book for the opinion of an old master. Any ragtimer should have it in his library as a reference book and a romance.

Jack Jarvis

Pianist Keeps Music Era Alive

This article on Johnny Maddox, written by columnist Jack Jarvis, appeared in the Seattle Post Intelligencer, February 11, 1965. It was sent to us by Howard H. Martin of Seattle.

JOHNNY MADDOX, RAGTIME PIANIST

He's Keeping An Era Alive

JOHNNY MADDOX deals in memories of a bygone era and he does it with an old-fashioned upright piano and the nostalgic musical style called ragtime. It used to be strictly "musicians' music," but then it became everybody's music.

I ran into Maddox at the Issaquah home of Jackie Souders, orchestra leader and my favorite bandmaster. Pianist Johnny Wittwer also was there and the conversation ranged from queries as to what ever happened to this or that musician to talk of the old tunes that Maddox plays.

Maddox looked over Souder's collection of ragtime and blues orchestrations and ran across one of "Crazy Bone Rag," first published in 1913 and the first piece Maddox ever recorded. Since that first recording in 1950 he's turned out 28 albums and 86 singles and this summer will go to Hollywood to remake many of his older albums in stereo.

His recording of "Crazy Otto" in 1955 was the first all-piano record to sell a million copies.

JOHNNY MADDOX WAS TAUGHT to play the piano by a great-aunt who had played at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904.

"She used to put me on the piano stool to keep me out of the way," he said. "But the noise I made by just beating the keys at random was too much for her and she started to give me lessons."

It was his great-aunt who got him interested in ragtime and he's been playing it "on the road" for the past 15 years. He recently wound up a long engagement in the Legend Room of the Northgate Bon Marche and now goes to Denver, Hollywood and Regina, and then, he hopes, back to Seattle in the late summer.

His hobby, which is also his work, is **"keeping an era alive"** and he's doing it admirably.

HE PREFERS TO PLAY PRE-1939 tunes but admits that **"you have to play what the customers want, too."**

But he hopes that "Hello, Dolly" will **"go over the Great Divide soon."** And the night I heard him play he resisted for almost half an hour a request for "Alley Kat."

"If I have to play 'Hello, Dolly,' they're going to have to listen to 'Sunflower Slow Drag,' which came out in 1901," he said.

And he likes to play for elderly people.

"It's wonderful to watch their faces," he said. "For a few minutes they're young again."

MADDOX HAS A COLLECTION OF records, 30,000 of them, made between 1894 and 1930 and **"tons of sheet music."** There's a resurgence in the collecting of old sheet music these days and when Johnny comes to town it seems to stimulate collectors.

But he's discovered that people forget how old they are. For instance, take "Bill Bailey," which came out in 1902; "Peg O' My Heart," 1913, and "Darktown Strutters' Ball," 1917.

"Many people think all three came out in the 1930s," he said.

JOHNNY NOW IS GETTING together orchestrations of ragtime and blues, which he plans to record with members of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra.

"We'll play them exactly as they were written back in the days when the violin was the leader and everyone played together," he said.

He's looking forward to his trip to Regina. The Canadians, he said, love ragtime and know the words to many of the old tunes. And the English like ragtime, too. When he gets requests for "Just Try To Picture Me Back Home In Tennessee" or "Broken Doll" he's pretty sure the requests are from Englishmen.

BEFORE HE GOES TO DENVER, he'll spend a week in Gallatin, Tenn., where he was born and raised and where his wife and their four sons live. He'll help the family move into a 100 - year - old house which was restored for them.

The big old house will have plenty of room for Johnny's records, sheet music, collection of old mechanical pianos and his books. He's a collector of children's books and also has first editions of almost all of Mark Twain's works.

Then, it'll be back on the road again, but his family may travel with him during the summer. And it'll be nice to have him back here, too.

RECORD REVIEWS

"The St. Louis Ragtimers" Volumes 1 and 2; Audiophile Records; AP-75 & AP-81

Personnel: Bill Mason, cornet; Don Franz, tuba; Trebor Tichenor, piano; Al Stricker, banjo; Ed Freund, drums (Vol. 1 only)

Volume 1:		Volume 2:	
Shake That Thing	Waiting for the	Cakewalking Babies	Bye and Bye
Lulu White	Robert E. Lee	From Home	I Ain't Rough
Sailing Down the	Gatemouth	Riverside Blues	Tank Town Bump
Chesapeake Bay	Canal Street Blues	Georgia Swing	Ragtime Rosie
Up Jumped the Devil	Ice Cream	Moving Day	Bucksnort Stomp
Mahogany Hall Stomp	Maple Leaf Rag	Black Mountain Rag	Ely Green's Cakewalk
Steamboat Stomp	Chattanooga Stomp	Dead Man Blues	They Gotta Quit Kickin'
King Chanticleer	Gut Bucket Blues	Chestnut Valley Rag	My Dawg Around

Reviewing two albums of this caliber is a downright pleasure. They contain as fine a collection of rags, stomps, cakewalks and blues as you could wish for, all played by a group of musicians whose heart and soul go into every bar.

I'm a little rusty on horn players, but Bill Mason is one of the freshest sounds I've heard in a long while -- crisp tone, nice phrasing and control, plus surging drive. The liner notes describe him as "one of the few cornetists to successfully forge an original style out of the traditional heritage of Oliver, Armstrong and Beiderbecke." And that just about says it.

The tuba work of leader Don Franz gives a pleasant balance and depth to the band, replacing the normal trombone-clarinet instrumentation with good effect.

Treb Tichenor plays fine ragtime piano, but he ranges with equal skill and authority through blues, stomps and bumps. There are many times when you'd swear you were listening to Lil Hardin or Jelly Roll.

Al Stricker's great chord banjo style keeps things moving along at a high-stepping pace, and his vocals add extra touches of variety and humor to the band's repertoire.

I won't attempt to single out "best" numbers -- they're all winners -- just some random impressions: BLACK MOUNTAIN RAG and UP JUMPED THE DEVIL - if you're still sitting down after the first eight bars, you are seriously inhibited; KING CHANTICLEER, GATEMOUTH and CAKEWALKING BABIES - just three of many ensemble swingers, the latter with a vocal duet a la Beatty and Todd; CHESTNUT VALLEY RAG and BUCKSNORT STOMP - two Tichenor originals, both with strong midwest accents; LULU WHITE and TANK TOWN BUMP - Brun Campbell and Ferd Morton, via Treb.

With their unusual material, instrumentation and zest, the St. Louis Ragtimers have a lot to offer, both to the ragtime enthusiast and the jazz afficianado. If you're tired of slick "dixie" sounds, these two albums will come as a refreshing change of pace.

-Bob Ashforth

"Blues and Old-Time Rags" - Red Nichols and the Five Pennies; Capital ST-2065

The rags in this package are: HOT HOUSE RAG, CLIMAX RAG, MAPLE LEAF RAG, MILENBERG JOYS, BLACK AND WHITE RAG and APPLE JACK (SOME RAG).

Unlike most dixieland bands, Red Nichols and the Pennies have done a fantastic job. The album notes state: "We surely need not add that this isn't rinky-tink ragtime." And it isn't, either! They take the classics at a moderate but happy tempo. Their rendition of MAPLE LEAF is perhaps the finest band version of the great Joplin rag I've ever heard. Bill Campbell does the piano work here, and does it well. He sticks basically to the piano score and the band fills in and backs him up. The album is an admirable attempt at band ragtime. -Gary Ellison

"Jelly Roll Morton" Mainstream Records; S-6020 . . . Commodore Jazz Classics

Side one . . Jelly plays and sings his own work; it is piano and vocal only: MAMIE'S BLUES, MICHIGAN WATER BLUES, BUDDY BOLDEN'S BLUES, WININ' BOY BLUES, DON'T LEAVE ME HERE.

Side two . . Jelly plays solo piano: ORIGINAL RAGS, THE NAKED DANCE, THE CRAVE, MISTER JOE, KING PORTER STOMP.

These original masters have been remastered and the sound is surprisingly good. The performances are classics. This album was available earlier and is now available again.

-Gary Ellison

Harmonies of the common folk provide roots for early American ragtime music

By DAVE LORENTZ

Ragtime, like any other music, has its roots in the rhythms and harmonies of the simple people. America presented a unique situation for the fusion of several different folk musics into a new and distinct form of native American music.

A certain proportion of African rhythm and harmony brought over with the slaves was mixed with European melody and harmony provided by the free white Americans to produce ragtime. A different mixture with a larger proportion of the African contribution yielded blues, which is the main content of jazz.

Since both ragtime and jazz have common ancestors, it is often thought that they are synonymous. However, while ragtime preceded jazz, it also overlapped for about 15 years and died out about 1920, when traditional jazz was at its height.

The two forms are separate and distinct because of the different proportions of African and European music involved in their respective creations. Ragtime got a large serving of African rhythm, and its harmony is largely European. Jazz, on the other hand, has less of a share of African rhythm, and more African harmony.

Folk ragtime, which later grew into classic ragtime, was being played on the banjo — another African innovation — and the guitar as early as the 1850's. Gradually ragtime became less fluid, and grew up bound in a traditional form, played more and more on the piano.

By 1890, illiterate pianists all over the central United States were playing ragtime, and trading rags among themselves. Its popularity was beginning to rise, but the infectious lilting rhythms were impossible to write, because music publishers had no idea how to notate ragtime syncopation.

In 1896, a young Negro got off the train in Sedalia, Mo. This young man's name was Scott Joplin, and he was to light the fuse that would explode ragtime all over America and Europe.

Scott Joplin was a ragtime composer, considered by many today to have originated many of the best rags ever written. In Sedalia, he met John Stark, a new publisher of sheet music. Mr. Joplin had learned how to write syncopation, and when Mr. Stark heard "Maple Leaf Rag", he bought and published it immediately.

"Maple Leaf" had already gotten a big reputation among ragtime pianists, and the first printing was snapped up almost immediately. This encouraged Mr. Stark to publish more of Mr. Joplin's rags, and the ball started rolling.

Mr. Joplin's music was quite melodic and close to the folk roots of country ragtime. It was simple and not showy, and everybody loved it. Music teachers would send their pupils home "with Bach under one arm and 'Maple Leaf' under the other." "Original Rags," "Sunflower Slow Drag," "Easy Winners," "Euphonic Sounds," and many others took the country and Europe by storm. Mr. Joplin acquired disciples who nearly equaled him in quality.

An eager young Negro named James Scott who had published before took his music to John Stark, and met Mr. Joplin. Mr. Scott's rags are difficult, but vivid and brilliant if played properly. Mr. Scott captured the attention of the people as well, and turned out such fine rags as "Frog Legs Rag," "Grace and Beauty," and "The Ragtime Oriole."

Joseph Lamb, one of the few white composers who wrote really good ragtime, met Mr. Joplin in Mr. Stark's music store. Mr. Stark didn't want to buy Mr. Lamb's compositions, but Mr. Joplin took one look at "Sensation Rog," made a few suggestions, and recommended that Mr. Stark buy it.

Mr. Lamb has been called the "Chopin of ragtime," and this is a good description of him. His rags are delicate, lacy, intricate, and quite difficult to play. His syncopations are practically unique, and his harmony is more involved than either Mr. Joplin's or Mr. Scott's.

Ragtime was doomed in the end by its own success, and the money it brought its creators killed it. Tin Pan Alley saw how well the excellent classic rags were selling, and decided to rake off some of the profits for themselves.

They took a look at ragtime and saw only the surface; the syncopation, a few stock phrases, and the "oom-pahh" of the left hand. They figured it had to be kept simple, because people who couldn't play it wouldn't want to buy it.

So with the stock phrases and the "keep it simple" attitude, the quality went down and down. The masters were still writing, but the public was deluged with a flood of bad music. They got the idea from the sheer volume of low quality ragtime that all ragtime was junk, and so ragtime was killed.

Today there is a small ragtime revival. It is again possible to buy sheet music in collections. There are two newsletters on the North American continent concerned exclusively with ragtime.

More and more "rinky-tink" pianists are starting to include some classic rags in their repertoires. There is a continent-wide Ragtime Society in King, Ontario. And after thirty years, people are starting to write good classic-style rags again.

The above article is reprinted with kind permission of the author, Dave Lorentz; it was published in the "Indiana Daily Student," newspaper of Indiana University, October 17, 1964. Dave tells us that the Archives of Traditional Music at I.U. is assmebling a section on Ragtime, and he has been assigned the job of getting it together. It will have examples of all ancestors and descendents of Ragtime (i.e., Coon songs and Harlem Stride Piano), but will lean most heavily on Classic (Big Three) Ragtime.

FROM OUR READERS

Peter Hanley, Brisbane, Australia: "Two questions concerning ragtime have puzzled me for a number of years. Firstly, whatever happened to Sammy Davis, Jelly Roll's great contemporary, who was located in Albany, New York around 1950? Did anyone ever record his playing or his comments about the music of New Orleans?

"Secondly, Rudi Blesh mentioned in his book that in 1950 he recorded the playing of both Arthur Marshall and Charley Thompson. Whatever happened to these records?"

If anyone can shed some light on Peter's queries, let us know and we'll pass the information along.

Father Cox of St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Bloomingdale, Ohio: "My interest in ragtime dates back to the time I was on my mother's knee. Well, she just had her 75th birthday, and celebrated it by playing MAPLE LEAF, EASY WINNERS and other good ones just like she heard them in the good old days."

From the inquiries coming in, it appears that member John S. Wilson, jazz critic for the New York Times and High Fidelity magazine, recently presented a program of ragtime on station WQXR-FM, New York. Our thanks to John for mentioning The Ragtime Society.

A question from Secretary Jim Kinnear: "Who was Mr. Frederick A. Scroggie (of Montreal) to whom Joseph M. Daly (of Boston) dedicated his PITTER-PATTER RAG in 1910?"

Harney Peterson, "The Queen City Jazz Man," Denver: "We had Max Morath and his Quartet here, in a lovely auditorium with fine piano, and a nearly flawless program - balance similar to his latest Epic LP. His group's timing is wondrous to behold, they work together beautifully. Jim Tyler's banjo is particularly great, he articulates rags so clearly you wouldn't believe it. Max has just closed his lovely home here and moved wife Norma, family and pianos to New York, where most of the jobs originate. Bob Darch and Johnny Maddox were here recently, both with the amazing material they know.

"I was amazed you hadn't heard Ralph Sutton's records, even though he stubbornly refuses to play most rags nowadays. He is a fantastic pianist when he cares to be -- best living player of Waller, James P. Johnson and Willie the Lion Smith (who's alive)."

Peggy Caton, Goleta, California: "I have been interested in the dances that prevailed during the Ragtime Era. In my limited experience with the type of dances that prevail at the university I attend, I have found the ragtime dances to be more exhilarating. However, I only know the basic steps to the Turkey Trot and One-Step. If you have any information or ideas on what the dances were and how they were danced, I would very much appreciate it. Our popular dances can be danced to some types of ragtime, and I would like to find out if the ragtime dances can be danced to popular music."

Sounds like a fine idea for an article, Peggy. Anyone like to do an essay on the Texas Tommy compared with the Frug? Let's hear about it!

Dave Lorentz, Bloomington, Ind.: "I recently acquired a Leabarjan Music Roll Perforator, the smallest Leabarjan made, with a maximum capacity of three rolls at once. I am therefore in a position to cut rolls to order, as long as either I or the customer has the sheet music. Since I have as yet only two rolls (Scott's EFFICIENCY RAG and Joplin's THE CASCADES) in my collection, I can cut practically anything without duplication. Regular 4-strain rags are $5, longer pieces and non-rags $6, and music with a time signature containing a 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, etc, $10 per roll. Of the three rolls cut, one goes to the customer, one to my collection and one into stock." Dave's address is: c/o Archives of Traditional Music, 013 Maxwell Hall, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 47405.

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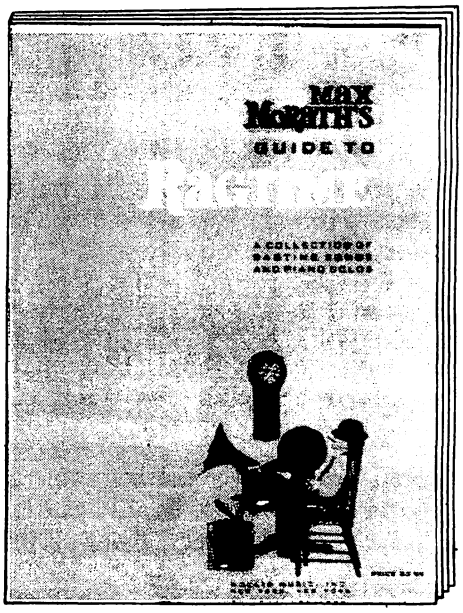

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